REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

1.   The Examiner rejected claims 16-19 and 53-56 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shaw in view of Wong.

Both the present application and Shaw provide for searching. The claims, however, require performing a search of a selected component database using metadata attributes associated with a component and dynamically creating a "search menu" using the metadata attributes associated with the selected component. As the name implies, a "search menu" is essentially a menu from which searches can be conducted. In accordance with described embodiments of the invention, the search menu displays a list of attributes for the selected component along with a respective value for each attribute. Since different components can have different attributes, the search menus for different components can include different "searchable" attributes. The search menu allows the user to enter search criteria for a subsequent search directly into the search menu and to choose which attributes to use as search criteria for the subsequent search.

Thus, for example, a particular component might have category, site part number, supplier part number, manufacturer part number, and supplier attributes. When the user selects the component, the system typically performs a search of a component database using the metadata attributes associated with the component and dynamically generates a search menu that lists the metadata attributes and the respective values associated with the selected component. The user could then enter criteria for a new search (e.g., the user could enter a new manufacturer part number into the manufacturer part number field) and search on that attribute only or on that attribute along with one or more other chosen attributes (e.g., category).

Shaw, on the other hand, does not perform a search of a selected component database using metadata attributes associated with the component and dynamically create a search menu using the metadata attributes associated with a selected component, as required by the present claims. Rather, Shaw builds a searchable hierarchy from multiple databases and defines a set of searchable characteristics, such as feature attributes, geometrical constraints, topological constraints, and geographical constraints. For example, as discussed in Shaw, the user can search for particular attributes of a feature,

such as "all bridges that exist." Searches are satisfied using the hierarchy. The portion cited by the Examiner at column 10, line 44 through column 11, line 40 describes how the hierarchy is built, but does not describe dynamically generating a search menu using metadata attributes, as the Examiner suggests.

The following portion of Shaw, which begins at column 14, line 13 (emphasis added), demonstrates the distinction:

Once built, the object-oriented VPF database is available for query and updating. **Both the spatial and non-spatial aspects of the three data formats of the present invention are used to effectively index the objects for faster queried retrieval and lower storage requirements**. Some queries may involve only the non-spatial aspect of the data, e.g. "Find all major highways." However, queries such as "find all major highways that pass through the state of Iowa" require a combination of both spatial and non-spatial attributes as search criteria. Referring now to FIG. 9, **the query process of the present invention begins with the user accessing the system, typically through a terminal or graphical user interface (not shown) and electing a query transaction. The system responds at step 90 by opening the map interface to the database.** The medium of access could be anything from a stand-alone server on a personal computer to an online international data base, to a web browser. **The user specifies at step 91 a geographic area of coverage**, either by coordinate points, longitude/latitude coordinates, or a place name optionally selected from a table of place names. **The system responds at step 92 by accessing the object-oriented databases, searching for a match between the database of spatial objects and the requested area of interest.** This process is shortened by accessing the VPF metadata for the VPF library objects within the database. **At step 93, the system lists to the user all databases whose geographic coverage includes at least part of the area of interest**, regardless of whether the databases are VPF, RPF, or TPS. **The user selects the database of choice at step 94. The system responds at steps 95 and 96 by listing all libraries within the database whose objects at least intersect the geographic area of interest. At step 97, the user selects a library of choice, in response to which the system lists to the user at step 98 all coverages and features covered by the selected library.** Exemplary coverages include population, obstruction, hydrography, earth cover, transportation, and navigation. **The user then**

selects at step 99 a coverage or feature(s) desired. To access the entire library, for example, the user would select all listed features. **At step 101 the system accesses the spatial data manager to search for all library objects within the geographical area of interest with the desired coverage or feature(s).** For VPF databases, a spatial data manager exists for each coverage and each feature type. For RPF databases, a spatial data manager exists for each coverage only.

At steps 93, 95, 96, and 98, the system lists information that is available at a particular level of the hierarchy, such as listing all libraries within the database whose objects at least intersect the geographic area of interest. At no point, however, does Shaw produce a "search menu" that displays the metatdata attributes and respective values associated with a selected object and also allows the user to enter new search criteria directly into the search menu.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the present invention as claimed is allowable over Shaw both alone and in combination with Wong.

2.   Applicants are filing herewith an Information Disclosure Statement citing references from an International Search Report (ISR) received for a related PCT application. The ISR cites two references that may be of particular relevance, namely the Byrnes article and published PCT application no. WO 97/15877. Of the two, only the Byrnes reference was deemed to relevant for a claim that is being prosecuted herein (i.e., claim 16). Upon review of these references, Applicants respectfully submit that neither of the references teaches or otherwise suggests a search menu of the type taught and claimed in the present application. In fact, neither appears to even mention anything about searches.

3.   All pending claims are believed to be in a form suitable for allowance. Therefore, the application is believed to be in a condition for allowance. The Applicant respectfully requests early allowance of the application. The Applicant requests that the Examiner contact the undersigned, Jeffrey T. Klayman, if it will assist further examination of this application.

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